

4. FBI Intelligence and Local Police Activities

a. FBI Informants. Robert G. Jensen, the Special Agent in Charge of the Memphis Field Office, and Joseph Hester, case agent for MURKIN, have unequivocally assured the task force that there was no electronic surveillance of Dr. King in Memphis. It was explained that Memphis was not in the mainstream of Dr. King's SCLC activities (Interview of Special Agent Joe Hester, June 23, 1976, App.B).

However, FBI agents did observe the sanitation worker's strike activities for intelligence purposes and the Memphis Police Department (MPD) and confidential paid informants did supply information to the field office (Interview of former SAC Robert Jensen, July 7, 1976, App.B).

Our investigation disclosed that there were five paid confidential informants providing intelligence regarding the racial situation to the Memphis Field Office on a continuing basis. The intelligence coverage provided by these individuals related to the activities of the Nation of Islam, Black Students Association of MSU, Students for a Democratic Society, Black Organizing Power, Black United Front, Afro-American Brotherhood, Invaders and the sanitation workers strike. There is

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no evidence that the activities of these informants related directly to Dr. King. Moreover, there is no evidence that would suggest that these informants were connected in any way with the assassination of Dr. King. (HQ 134-11867; 170-1841; 170-1922; 170-2530 and 137-4885.)

b. MPD Infiltration of the Invaders. In addition to the paid FBI informants, an officer of the MPD infiltrated the Invaders in an undercover operation. The officer who was later exposed and is no longer with the MPD, was interviewed by the task force. The undercover assignment began in February of 1968 for the specific purpose of infiltrating the Invaders who became active about the same time of the sanitation workers strike. According to the officer the MPD was primarily interested in the Invaders, not Dr. King, because the MPD was concerned about what they might do. The police officer was, in fact, accepted as a member of the Invaders and participated in their activities. On the evening of April 4, 1968, when Dr. King was shot, the informant had been on a shopping trip with Reverend James Bevel and Reverend James Orange. The informant said he returned to the Lorraine Motel at approximately 5:00p.m. and was standing in the motel courtyard at the time Dr. King was shot. He is positive that the shot that killed Dr. King

came from the rear of the buildings which front on South Main Street.

c. MPD Surveillance Detail and Removal of Detective Redditt from Duty. */ From the time of Dr. King's return to Memphis on April 3, 1968, until the time of his assassination, he was under physical surveillance by the MPD. Upon learning of Dr. King's flight schedule, Inspector G.P. Tines of the MPD Inspectional Bureau instructed two black plainclothes officers, Detective Edward E. Redditt and Patrolman Willie B. Richmond, to go to the airport to observe the arrival of Dr. King and to keep him under continuous surveillance in order to see with whom he came in contact. According to Inspector Tines, the surveillance was ordered because Dr. King was a controversial figure and had met with local black militants on his prior visit to Memphis. While at the airport a Mrs. Thomas Matthews pointed her finger at Redditt and told him that she was going to get him. (Report of G.P. Tines, July 17, 1968, Re: Security and Surveillance of Dr. King, App. B.)

*/ The removal of Redditt from duty was cited as one of the bases for the House Select Committee to investigate the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr.

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In addition to the surveillance detail, Assistant Chief of Police W.P. Huston ordered a detail of four men, commanded by Inspector Don H. Smith, to go to the airport for the purpose of providing security for Dr. King. While waiting for Dr. King to arrive, Mrs. Thomas Matthews advised Lieutenant George K. Davis that she had come to the airport to pick up Dr. King and that no one had asked for police to be assigned to him. Inspector Smith also asked Reverend James Lawson where they were going when they left the airport and he replied: "We have not fully made up our minds." Nevertheless, when Dr. King and his party left the airport, Inspector Smith and his men followed them to the Lorraine Motel, arriving there at approximately 11:20a.m. With the assistance of Inspector J.S. Gaglian and two other officers, Inspector Smith and his men secured the entrances to the motel.

Dr. King and his party left the Lorraine Motel at approximately 12:05p.m. and were followed by the security detail to the Centenary Methodist Church where a meeting was held. The detail secured the front and rear entrances of the Church until approximately 2:15p.m. when Dr. King and his group returned to the motel. The security detail then returned to the motel area and resumed their positions until they were ordered to headquarters by Chief J.C. Macdonald

at approximately 5:05p.m. Inspector G.P. Tines stated in his report that he was not conferred with and has no idea why the security detail was removed from Dr. King after 5:05p.m. Former Chief Macdonald has no present recollection of the security detail (Interview of James C. Macdonald, former Chief MPD, December 22, 1976, App. B.) The security detail was not resumed on April 4, 1968, (Reports of Inspectors Don H. Smith and J.S. Gagliano as incorporated in Report of Inspector G.P. Tines, supra.)

As a separate activity from the security detail, Detective Redditt and Patrolman Richmond went to the airport on April 3rd and observed Dr. King's arrival. When Dr. King left the airport they followed him to the Lorraine Motel and learned that he was registered in room 306. Redditt telephoned headquarters and informed Inspector Tines where Dr. King was staying. At approximately 12:05p.m. Redditt and Richmond followed Dr. King and his party to the Centenary Methodist Church where a closed meeting of approximately 30 black ministers was scheduled. Redditt again called headquarters and advised his superiors of his location. Redditt was instructed to leave Richmond at the church and for him to return to the area of the Lorraine Motel for the purpose of finding a suitable place where close surveillance could be kept on the motel. Richmond remained at the Centenary Methodist Church until the

meeting was over at approximately 2:15p.m. Richmond then went to Clayborn Temple where he thought Dr. King would address the sanitation workers prior to a scheduled 3:00p.m. march. However, Dr. King did not make an appearance there. Richmond telephoned headquarters at about 3:30p.m. and was advised that Dr. King had returned to the motel and that Redditt had set up a surveillance post at Fire Station No. 2, located at South Main and Butler streets. Richmond immediately left Clayborn Temple and joined Redditt at the fire station. (Interview of Patrolman W.B. Richmond, April 9, 1968, MPD Statements, State v. James Earl Ray p. 1444).

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The rear of Fire Station No. 2 overlooks the Lorraine Motel and provided an excellent vantage point where Redditt and Richmond could observe Dr. King and his associates as they entered and left the motel. On April 3, 1968, Redditt and Richmond remained at their observation post until 6:35p.m. at which time they were relieved by Lieutenant E.H. Arkin and Lieutenant J.V. Papia of the MPD Internal Security Bureau. (Statement of Edward E. Redditt, April 10, 1968, MPD Statements, State vs. James Earl Ray p. 1453).

After leaving their observation post, Redditt and Richmond went to the Mason Temple where Dr. King was

scheduled to address a mass meeting. Shortly after they arrived at the temple, Redditt was approached by Reverend Malcomb D. Blackburn and told that the word was out that he was over in the fire station near the Lorraine Motel spying with binoculars. Reverend Blackburn also advised Richmond that the temple was the wrong place for him because the tension was too high. Fearing they would be exposed, Redditt and Richmond left the meeting at approximately 8:50p.m. (Report of Inspector G.P. Tines.)

Redditt and Richmond resumed their surveillance of the Lorraine Motel from Fire Station No. 2 on April 4, 1968, at 10:30a.m. At approximately 12:50p.m. Redditt received a threatening telephone call from a female who stated that he was doing the black people wrong, and they were going to do him wrong. (Interview of Edward E. Redditt, April 10, 1968.)

At approximately 4:00p.m., Redditt was ordered by telephone to leave the fire station and report to headquarters where he was advised that threats had been made on his life. He was, therefore, ordered to move his family into a motel under an assumed name by Frank Holloman, former Director of Police and Fire, Memphis, Tenn. (Interview of Frank Holloman, September 15, 1976, App. B.) Redditt was taken

home in a squad car, but refused to move his family because of a sick relative. At about the time the squad car arrived in front of Redditt's residence, it was announced on the radio that Dr. King had been shot. After a couple of days, Redditt did not hear any more about the threat on his life. (Interview of Edward E. Redditt, July 8, 1976, App. B.)

ly In our efforts to trace the source of the threat, we have found that Philip R. Manuel, an investigator with the Senate Investigating Committee, chaired by Senator McClellan was in Memphis on April 4, 1968. While at the MPD Manuel advised them based on a telephone call to his office in Washington, that the Senate Committee Staff had information from an informant in Mississippi that the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party had made plans to kill a "Negro lieutenant" in Memphis. Manuel left Memphis on a 5:50p.m. flight to Washington and the next day (April 5, 1968) he telephoned the MPD and advised them that the threat was on the life of a "Negro lieutenant" in Knoxville rather than Memphis. (Report of Inspector G.P. Tines, July 17, 1968, supra.)

Philip R. Manuel neither has a present recollection of providing the information regarding the threat to the MPD, nor does he have a memorandum of the event. However, he

confirmed that he was in Memphis and visited the MPD at the time stated and that his office did have a Mississippi source. Moreover, he said the events sounded familiar and he believed the MPD records were correct. (Interview of Philip R. Manuel, September 28, 1976, App. B.)

Although Redditt was relieved from duty at Fire Station No. 2, Richmond remained there and continued to observe who entered and left the motel. At approximately 6:00p.m. Richmond saw Dr. King leave his room and walk to the handrail on the balcony. The Reverend Billy Kyles was standing off to Dr. King's right. An instant later Richmond heard a loud sound similar to a shot and saw Dr. King fall back from the handrail and put his hand up to his head. At approximately 6:01p.m. Richmond telephoned headquarters and reported that Dr. King had been shot. He was instructed to remain at the fire station. Richmond then yelled to members of a MPD tactical squad (which had stopped at the station a few moments earlier) that he believed Dr. King had been shot. He then ran to the front of the fire station and looked north and south on South Main Street, but did not see anyone running or walking, except the men in the tactical squad who left the fire station running in different directions. Shortly thereafter,

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Captain J.G. Ray arrived at the fire station and instructed Richmond to go to headquarters and make a detailed report of what he had seen. (Interview of Patrolman W.B. Richmond, April 9, 1968, supra.)

d. Details of Two Black Firemen from Fire Station

No. 2.*/ As of April 3, 1968, Norvell E. Wallace and Floyd E. Newsum were the only black firemen assigned to Fire Station No. 2 of the Memphis Fire Department (MFD). Wallace was working the night shift on April 3rd and Newsum was scheduled to report for the day shift on April 4th. Both of these individuals actively supported the sanitation workers strike, attending their rallies and making financial contributions.

In our interview of Wallace (Interview July 8, 1976 App. B.) he stated that at about 10:00 or 10:30 on the night of April 3rd his captain told him that a call had come in requesting that a man be detailed to Fire Station No. 33. He was immediately detailed to No. 33 although it was raining and he was preparing to go to bed. Wallace further stated that while Fire Station No. 33 was understaffed as a whole, there was no shortage of personnel for the pump truck on which he worked. Otherwise, he does not know why he was detailed.

*/ The details of the black firemen from Fire Station No. 2 is a second reason cited as a basis for the House Select Committee to investigate the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr.

Also, on the night of April 3rd Fireman Newsum, in a wholly personal capacity, attended a rally at the Mason Temple where Dr. King made his last speech. When he returned home (about 10:30p.m.) there was a message for him to call Lt. J. Smith at the fire department. When he called, Lt. J. Smith ordered him to report to Fire Station No. 31 on the morning of April 4th rather than Fire Station No. 2. Newsum claims that Fire Station No. 31 was overstrength at the time and his detail made his company short. Moreover, he says he never has received a satisfactory explanation why he was detailed. However, he did say that Lt. Barnett at one time told him he was detailed at the request of the police. (Interview of Floyd E. Newsum, July 8, 1976, App. B.)

Interviews of past and present members of the MFD have failed to disclose the individual who initiated the order or the reason for detailing Wallace and Newsum. According to former Lt. Jack Smith, he received a telephone call between 3:00p.m. and 5:00p.m. on April 3, 1968, from either Captain James T. Baity or former Assistant Chief Arthur J. Rivalto in the personnel department specifically requesting that Newsum be detailed. No reason was given for the detail. Smith said he immediately called Newsum, but Newsum was not

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home. Therefore, Smith left a message for Newsum to call the fire station. Newsum called about 10:30p.m. and Smith advised him of the detail (Interview of Jack Smith, dated September 27, 1976).

Wallace's commanding officer, then Captain R.T. Johnson, likewise stated that he received a telephone call from someone in the personnel department requesting him to detail Wallace. However, Johnson has no present recollection of who the individual was that made the request. (Interview of R.T. Johnson, Deputy Chief, Memphis Fire Department, December 21, 1976, App. B.)

Neither Captain Baity nor former Assistant Chief Rivalto has any present recollection of the detail of Wallace or Newsum. Captain Baity indicated that any district chief could have ordered the men moved (Interview of James T. Baity, September 27, 1976, App. B). Also, former Assistant Chief Rivalto said the fire department shifted people around all the time when a company became understrength because of sickness, etc. (Interview of Arthur J. Rivalto, September 27, 1976, App. B).

Similarly, the former Chief of the MFD, Edward A. Hamilton, has no recollection of the details. He speculated that the men could have been detailed for a "fill in" to bring a company up to strength (Interview of Edward A. Hamilton, September 27, 1976, App. B).

The MFD Strength Report-Firefighting Personnel for Shift "A", Battalions One and Eight, dated April 3, 1968 (attached to Reinterview of James R. Boatwright, October 20, 1976, App. B) show that Wallace's Company No. 2 at Fire Station No. 2 was operating at minimum strength (five men) after he was detailed; whereas Company No. 33 to which he was detailed operated at one over the minimum strength (four men) after the detail. Likewise, the Strength Report for Shift "B" for Battalions One and Two, dated April 4, 1968 (Also attached to the Boatwright interview of October 20, 1976) show that Newsum's Company No. 55 at Fire Station No. 2 was operating at minimum strength (five men) after the detail, but Company 31 to which he was detailed operated at one over the minimum strength (four men) after the detail.

However, former Deputy Chief James O. Barnett stated that the people on the security detail operating out of the fire station probably felt better without Wallace and Newsum around (Interview of James O. Barnett, September 27, 1976.) On the other hand, Assistant Chief James R. Boatwright explained that they were having a very tense situation at the time; that a number of threatening calls had been received at Fire Station No. 2; and that the consensus of opinion was that Wallace and Newsum were detailed for their own protection, since they were the only black firemen assigned to that station (Interview of James R. Boatwright, September 23, 1976).

In this connection MPD Patrolman Willie B. Richmond and former Detective Edward E. Redditt, who conducted the surveillance of Dr. King and his associates from the fire station, were recontacted and specifically asked whether they had requested that Wallace and Newsum be detailed. Both Richmond and Redditt denied that they made such a request or had knowledge of any one else in the police department making such a request (Reinterviews of Richmond and Redditt, September 28, 1976, App. B).

Our investigation has not disclosed any evidence that the detail of Wallace and Newsum was in any way connected with the assassination of Dr. King. However, the circumstances surrounding the details strongly suggest that both men were detailed because they supported the sanitation workers and were considered to be a threat to the security of the surveillance of Dr. King conducted from the fire station by Patrolman Richmond and Detective Redditt.